

Message Text

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AF/W:JLLOUGHRAN

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU PRIORITY

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AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER DISPUTE: THE FRENCH
POSITION?

REF: LOME 0028

1.THE MOST RECENT AND MOST ACUTE PHASE OF THE ENDURING
MALI-UPPER VOLTA TERRITORIAL DISPUTE CONFRONTS US WITH A
POLICY DECISION. TO WHAT DEGREE, IF ANY, SHOULD WE PER-
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MIT THE VOLTANS AND/OR THE MALIANS TO ACQUIRE, THROUGH

EITHER CASH OR CREDIT PURCHASES, ADDITIONAL ARMAMENTS OR MATERIEL FROM U.S. SOURCES?

2. SINCE THE PRESENT TENSION FLARED INTO BRIEF AND LIMITED HOSTILITIES IN MID-DECEMBER, WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING URGENT REQUESTS FROM THE GOUV FOR GRANT MILITARY AID AND/OR CREDIT OR CASH MILITARY SALES (UPPER VOLTA IS ELIGIBLE FOR

FMS CASH SALES ONLY). IN LIGHT OF THE SENSE OF HUMILIATION EXPERIENCED BY THE GOUV IN DECEMBER, WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THEIR MILITARY INFERIORITY TO THE MALIANS AND THEIR INABILITY TO COPE WITH (AS THE VOLTANS CONCEIVED IT) MALIAN INTRUSIONS ON VOLTAN TERRITORY, WE EXPECT THE VOLTANS TO PERSIST IN THEIR REQUEST FOR ARMS SALES REGARDLESS OF HOW THE ONGOING DELIBERATIONS OF THE MEDIATION COMMISSION IN LOME EVOLVE. WE GIVE FULL CREDENCE TO VOLTAN AMBASSADOR YAGUIBOU'S ASSERTION TO US THAT THE GOUV, HAVING BEEN CAUGHT SHORT ONCE, DOES NOT INTEND TO LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN. THUS FAR WE HAVE BEEN UNRESPONSIVE ON GRANT AID OR CREDIT SALES AND HAVE RESERVED OUR POSITION ON CASH SALES, I.E., THE ISSUANCE OF EXPORT LICENSES UNDER MUNITIONS CONTROL.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, WE HAVE IN THE PIPELINE FOR MALI A FEW MODEST MATERIEL ITEMS (PARACHUTES, C-47 SPARES AND A LANGUAGE LAB) STEMMING FROM AN FMS LINE OF CREDIT EXTENDED TO MALI IN FY 1972. MOREOVER, WE ANTICIPATE A VISIT TO WASHINGTON BY MALIAN DEFENSE MINISTER DAKOURE LATER THIS MONTH. WHILE THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT IS, WE UNDERSTAND, TO DISCUSS SAHELIAN DROUGHT-RELIEF MEASURES, WE CANNOT IGNORE THE PROBABILITY THAT HE MAY RAISE THE QUESTION OF CONTINUANCE OF MAP TRAINING FOR MALI.

4. IN DELIBERATIONS ON THIS SUBJECT, ONE AMONG MANY IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MUST BE WEIGHED IS THE POSITION OF FRANCE. WHILE IT APPEARS THAT THE GOF IS ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN AN EVEN-HANDED POSTURE WITH RESPECT TO A DISPUTE BETWEEN TWO FORMER COLONIES WITH WHICH IT HAS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS, OUR REAL KNOWLEDGE OF FRENCH INTENTIONS AMOUNTS ONLY TO A FEW STRAWS IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WIND. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON FRENCH ATTITUDES AND THE GOF'S STRATEGY FOR COPING WITH ITS OWN DELICATE SITUATION WOULD BE MOST USEFUL. SPECIFICALLY, WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT:

1) HOW THE GOF PROPOSES TO DEAL WITH THE QUADRIPARTITE MEDIATION COMMISSION NOW CONVENED IN LOME? WE KNOW THAT ONE VOLTAN GRIEVANCE AGAINST THE FRENCH HAS BEEN ALLEGED

FRENCH REFUSAL TO PROVIDE THE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE, (E.G., MAPS) WHICH THE GOUV ASSERTS WOULD PROVE BEYOND QUESTION ITS CLAIM TO THE TERRITORY IN DISPUTE. WE NOTE (LOME 0028) THAT FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING REPORTEDLY SENT A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT EYADEMA EXPRESSING SATISFACTION WITH THE CONVENING OF THE COMMISSION AND STATING THAT "FRENCH AUTHORITIES ARE DISPOSED TO TRANSMIT WITHOUT RESERVE DOCUMENTS IN THEIR POSSESSION" WHICH MIGHT THROW SOME LIGHT ON THE MATTER. JUST WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

2) WHAT WOULD BE THE FRENCH REACTION TO REQUESTS FROM EITHER SIDE FOR NEW OR ACCELERATED ARMS ASSISTANCE? THE VOLTANS HAVE SAID THAT THEY DO NOT INTEND TO SEEK ARMS FROM THE FRENCH AT THIS TIME, YET WE NOW HAVE AN UNSUBSTANTIATED REPORT THAT EITHER THE VOLTAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE OR POSSIBLY DAKOURE HAS BEEN IN PARIS WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS SEEKING ARMS AID.

3) MORE GENERALLY, HOW ACTIVE HAVE THE FRENCH BEEN BEHIND THE SCENES IN (PRESUMABLY) COUNSELING MODERATION WITH THE MALIANS AND VOLTANS EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH NEIGHBORING GOVERNMENTS?

WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION ADDRESSEE POSTS CAN PROVIDE ON THESE AND RELATED QUESTIONS.

5. FOR PARIS: REQUEST YOU APPROACH QUAI TO FIND OUT EXTENT TO WHICH FRENCH PREPARED TO SHARE WITH US THEIR APPRECIATION OF THE MALI-UPPER VOLTA SITUATION AND THEIR POSITION REGARDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE PARTIES INVOLVED. KISSINGER

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